

NEWS AND NOTES FOR FLORIDA VETERANS

Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office
St. Petersburg, FL

May 2005



The "News and Notes for Florida Veterans" is published monthly by the Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg, Florida, to provide information on VA benefit programs to veterans and dependents in Florida. The material presented does not have the effect of laws or regulations. Please send questions or comments on this newsletter to Veterans Service Center, ATTN: "News and Notes," PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731. We do not have the resources to maintain a mailing list for distribution to individuals; however this newsletter is available on the St. Petersburg VA Regional Office web site at www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete.

MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONIES AT NATIONAL CEMETERIES IN FLORIDA These ceremonies are open to the public.

Barrancas National Cemetery (Pensacola Naval Air Station - the cemetery is located approximately eight miles southwest of downtown Pensacola. Travel west on 12th Avenue bearing right onto Fairfield Drive. When Fairfield divides, go left onto State Road 295 (following signs to Naval Air Station). Enter base in right lane, cemetery will be on the right.) - on Saturday, May 28, the Boy Scouts will place American flags on the gravesites. The Memorial Day Service begins at 9:00 AM (CDT) on May 30. The guest speaker will be author Tex Atkinson, Commander, U.S. Navy (retired), who received his wings in July 1949. He made five carrier tours and flew over 100 combat missions in Korea before retiring from the Navy in 1968. He holds numerous awards, including the Distinguished Flying Cross. The Navy Choir will perform. For information call 850-453-4108.

Bay Pines National Cemetery (10,000 Bay Pines Blvd, St Petersburg - take Interstate 275 to Exit 25 (38th Avenue North) and go west on 38th Avenue North about five miles to Tyrone Boulevard. Turn right onto Tyrone Boulevard, which becomes Bay Pines Boulevard, and go approximately five miles. Go over bridge to the 1st traffic light and turn left (this is the back entrance to the VA grounds). Follow that road about ¼ mile and the cemetery will be on the left.) - Memorial Day Service begins at 9:00 AM on May 30. The featured speaker will be Congressman C. W. "Bill" Young. Shuttle service will be provided from the parking lot to the cemetery. For information call the Bay Pines VA Medical Center Voluntary Service, which is in charge of the ceremony, at 727-398-9394.

Florida National Cemetery (6502 SW 102nd Ave, Bushnell - take Interstate 75 to Exit 309 (Webster), which places you on county road 476B West. Cemetery is on the left about 1 mile.) - Memorial Day Service begins at 10:00 AM on May 30. The ceremony is sponsored by the Florida National Cemetery Joint Veterans Committee. The Avenue of Flags, consisting of approximately 400 American flags, used to drape the caskets or cremation urns of veterans during

committal services and donated to the cemetery by the next of kin of the deceased veterans, will be displayed along the cemetery roadways. Guests are encouraged to arrive early and enjoy the patriotic and inspirational musical prelude, which will begin prior to the Ceremony. Organizations with colors are invited to participate in the massing of colors at the beginning of the ceremony and should arrive at 8:30 AM. The South Sumter High School Band and soloist Linda Burnette will perform during the ceremony. The Ye Mystic Aircrew will conduct a flyover and the Dade City Florida National Guard Battery B will provide the gun salute. The guest speaker will be Mr. Forest Farley, Director of the James A Haley VA Medical Center. Mr. Farley is a Marine Corps veteran who served in Vietnam and was awarded the Purple Heart Medal with three gold stars. The cemetery's Public Information Center will be open from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM to assist visitors with inquiries. Seating is limited; those attending are encouraged to arrive early, wear comfortable clothing and bring a lawn chair or blanket to sit on. For information, call 352-793-7740.

St. Augustine National Cemetery (104 Marine St, St. Augustine - adjacent to Florida National Guard Headquarters. From U.S. Route 1, turn east on King Street. Travel one mile to Aemenida Menendes. Then turn right (four blocks) on Menendes to enter Marine Street. The Cemetery is in the first block.) - Memorial Day Service begins at 10:15 AM on May 30. The ceremony is sponsored by the Military Officers Association of America, the Florida National Guard, and the St. Johns County Veteran Service Office. Honor guards from veterans service organizations and the St. Augustine High School Band will participate. The featured speaker will be Dr. Giles McCoy, a survivor of the sinking of the *USS Indianapolis* in late World War II. The names of veterans from St. Johns County who have passed away since Veterans Day 2004 will be read. For information call the St. Johns County Veterans Service Office at 904-823-2463.

DISPLAYING THE U.S. FLAG ON MEMORIAL DAY On Memorial Day the flag should be displayed at half-staff until noon only, then raised to the top of the staff. The flag, when flown at half-staff, should be first hoisted to the peak for an instant and then lowered to the half-staff position.

VR&E CAREER RESOURCE CENTER OPEN The Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Career Resource Center in the St. Petersburg VA Regional Office is now open to all veterans. The Center includes a freestanding computer center where veterans can develop a resume; search Department of Labor job listings; search the internet for career opportunities and apply for job openings on-line; and fax resumes to employers. The Career Resource Center is fully staffed to provide personalized job placement assistance; labor market information on the jobs and employers in this area; assistance with "hot jobs" and with jobs listed locally; help using the internet to expand a job search; job readiness training in areas such as interviewing skills, marketing to employers, developing a resume, etc.; assistance in overcoming barriers to employment; referrals to Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors for career counseling and rehabilitation plan development; and referral information for counseling, family support, and other needed services.

A VR&E Employment Specialist provides job placement services for VA Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Chapter 31) participants; networks with community employers to identify job opportunities; specializes in assisting veterans to prepare for employment and land the right job; and makes referral to VR&E Counselors for assistance with job accommodations or needed training.

Work Net Pinellas Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) Placement Representatives provide specialized job placement services for all veterans including Chapter 31 participants; network with DVOPs throughout the area and match veterans with DVOPs in their communities for direct job placement assistance; and work with employers to establish on-the-job training and assist non-Chapter 31 veterans with training needs.

The VA Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Program thanks the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and Work Net Pinellas for their support in opening the Career Resource Center. The Center is located in the Varnum Room (Room 233) in the VA Regional Office, 9500 Bay Pines Boulevard in St. Petersburg. For information call 727-319-7902.

NEW EDUCATION BENEFIT FOR ACTIVATED RESERVISTS H.R 4200 authorizing the creation of a new education benefit was signed into law on October 28, 2004. The new benefit, Chapter 1607, makes certain individuals who were activated after September 11, 2001 either eligible for education benefits or eligible for increased benefits. The Department of Defense (DOD), Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and VA are working on an implementation plan for this new benefit. See <http://www.gibill.va.gov/>

IMPORTANT DATES IN MAY

May 9 last day to input change of address or establish direct deposit on compensation and pension awards in time for the 06-01-2005 payments

May 20 last day to change or cancel direct deposit on compensation and pension awards in time for the 06-01-2005 payments

May 30 Federal Holiday - Memorial Day

VA FACILITIES ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg - PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731 **1-800-827-1000**

Regional Processing Office, Atlanta, GA (education claims) - PO Box 100022, Decatur, GA 30031-7022 **1-888-GIBILL1 (442-4551)**
Telephone number for Chapter 30 self-verifications **1-877-823-2378**

Veterans Health Administration Toll-Free Hotline (medical care) - **1-877-222-8387**

VA EFT Information Hotline (electronic funds transfer - direct deposit) **1-877-838-2778**

VA Insurance Center, Philadelphia (VA Insurance) - PO Box 42954, Philadelphia, PA 19101 **1-800-669-8477**

VA Health Administration Center (CHAMPVA and Spina Bifida health care) -
CHAMPVA inquiries: PO Box 65023, Denver, CO 80206-5023
CHAMPVA claims: PO Box 65024, Denver, CO 80206-5024
Spina Bifida inquiries and claims: PO Box 65025, Denver, CO 80206-5025 **1-800-733-8387**

Foreign Medical Program Office (medical treatment abroad) -
PO Box 65021, Denver, CO 80206-5021 **303-331-7590**

National Cemeteries
10,000 Bay Pines Blvd N, Bay Pines FL **727-398-9426**
6502 SW 102nd Ave, Bushnell FL 33513 **352-793-7740**
Naval Air Station, Pensacola FL **850-453-4108/4846**

National Cemetery Administration Office of Memorial Programs (headstones and markers) - 810 Vermont Ave NW, Washington, DC 20420 **1-800-697-6947**

Loan Guaranty Eligibility Center (certificates of eligibility)
PO Box 20729, Winston-Salem, NC 27120
1-888-244-6711

Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) Unit -
Chicago VA Regional Office **1-800-829-4833**

INTERNET SITES OF INTEREST:

VA Web Site: **www.va.gov**

VA Web Automated Reference Materials System (WARMS)
<http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/>

Property Management **www.ocwen.com**

Florida Department of Veterans Affairs:
www.floridavets.org/

St. Pete Regional Office: **www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete**

